

Lake Davis Steering Committee Task Force

Newsletter

Volume 3, Issue 1 * December 2002

Message from the Chair....

This is the fifth newsletter to be sent out to everyone in Plumas County Supervisorial District 1 and parts of District 5, as well as to our mailing list of interested people. This is in keeping with the promise of the Lake Davis Steering Committee to keep the public informed of what is happening in our quest to rid Lake Davis of northern pike.

The next meeting of the Lake Davis Coalition will be held **Monday, January 13 at 6:30 P.M.** at Portola Station Baptist Church on Gulling St. in Portola and is open to the public.

We encourage you to come and bring a friend! This meeting will be a great way to hear information first hand. We will talk about current data on pike at the lake, updating the *Y2K Plan* and where the community thinks we should go from here. *We again want the input of you, the community. What do you think and where do you feel we should be heading in the future in our quest to not only rid Lake Davis of Pike but also, in the process, protect our community's future?* Other issues we'll discuss are planning to upgrade the Lake Davis Treatment Plant and status of water levels at Lake Davis.

Let us all remember when talking to friends either in Plumas County or from another area - **TROUT FISHING IS ALIVE AND WELL IN LAKE DAVIS – the northern pike have not taken over our lake.** With the help of the California Department of Fish and Game we will be able to make that statement for many years to come. With the help of all of the members of the Steering Committee and all of you, the general public, we will win this fight against the northern pike.

See you on January 13 at 6:30 P.M. If you have any questions regarding the meeting you may call me at **530-832-4174** or your local CDF&G office at **530-832-4069**.

Sincerely,

Fran Roudebush, Chair
Lake Davis Steering Committee

Your help is needed to report new sightings and to prevent the spread of northern pike. Northern pike are torpedo-shaped and have a large, wide head, flattened jaw, and long, pointed teeth. Pike are usually greenish, with yellowish bars. The dorsal fins are far back on the body. For photos, see www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike.



Portola staff finishes up third season at Lake Davis

Portola Field Office staff, California Department of Fish and Game

By mid-December, Lake Davis was starting to freeze over, and the Department of Fish and Game finished up its season on the reservoir. For three years, our staff in the Portola office, in cooperation with the local community, have been carrying out a recipe to keep pike numbers down. This recipe is found in *Managing Pike at Lake Davis: A Plan for Y2000*, and seeks to control and contain the pike until the Department and the local community can come to a mutually acceptable way of getting rid of them. The Department of Fish and Game, the City of Portola, Plumas County and the public at large cooperated in producing this plan.

We are happy to report that we have been successful in removing many pike from the reservoir, but are concerned that these numbers are increasing. Fortunately, most of the pike are still small, and incapable of eating the larger trout that we have been planting.

We caught nearly 18,000 pike this year. The vast majority (96%) were small fish (generally under 10") less than a year old. Most of these fish were caught by our crews using electrofishing boats, but we also used beach seines, a commercial purse seine, and other methods. We tested detonation cord in a small area up in Mosquito Slough, to see how effective it would be in killing pike. We put pike in live cars, and the cord killed all pike at a distance of 23 feet.

Here are the results of our efforts to date:

| <u>Year</u> | <u>Number of pike</u> | <u>Workforce</u> |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1999 | 218 | A few crews working sporadically |
| 2000 | 601 | Two full-time crews entire season |
| 2001 | 6,358 | Three full-time crews entire season |
| 2002 | 17,635 | Two full-time crews entire season |

While the amount of effort we put into each method varied somewhat over the last three years, it is roughly comparable. By observing the internal organs of the pike we catch, it appears that most are maturing quickly and will be able to spawn in their second year (in other words, in the spring of 2003, the fish that hatched in 2001 will be able to lay eggs). We looked at the egg skeins of a few of these young fish this fall, and estimated them to contain between 9,000 and 14,000 eggs per fish. Of course, not all of these eggs will survive to adulthood, but even if only one in 1000 survive, these young (year 2001) fish will be able to produce a generation that is 9 to 14 times larger than their own generation this coming spring! Larger, older fish (hatched in 1999 and 2000) can contain 100,000 eggs each.

We will continue to follow the *Y2000 Plan* recipe next year. We will have electrofishing boats on the lake again, as well as our usual arsenal of various types of nets. We also plan to use detonation cord in pockets of the reservoir where pike are concentrated. We will continue to work with members of the community to plan for the future.

Please come to the Coalition meeting on January 13th to help us examine the *Y2000 Plan* and help guide policy for 2003 and beyond. Remember, the *Y2000 Plan* is a community effort and your input is needed. For further information on the pike situation at Lake Davis please contact Ivan Paulsen at (530) 832-4067 or one of our staff members at (530) 832-9682. Or, check out the web site at www.dfg.ca.gov/northernpike.

Lake Davis is Still a Great Trout Fishery

California Department of Fish and Game

After the typical summer slowdown at Lake Davis, fishing improved significantly in the fall months. Lake Davis is known as one of the state's best trophy rainbow trout lakes. This year, about 50,000 trout weighting half a pound each were stocked, which grow about one inch per month. This fall, many anglers landed trout from 20 to 22 inches. There are also a few brown trout in the reservoir – the Department of Fish and Game planted 900 brood stock in June of 2000.

“People think the pike have taken over the lake, but on the contrary, trout are still here,” Paulsen said. “I think people imagine the pike in here are all 10 pounds each, but that's not true. There are actually very few pike capable of eating trout in here. This year the pike have had an insignificant effect on the trout population. Our sampling efforts confirm that there are a lot of trout in the lake.”



Glen Fair with a 3-lb rainbow caught in the Freeman arm this August

Well Sampling is Completed for the Fourth Year

Plumas County Environmental Health

The Plumas County Department of Environmental Health has completed the fourth year of its 10-year commitment to monitor 81 wells in the Lake Davis area. Testing is done annually for chemicals that were used in the 1997 rotenone treatment: a variety of volatile organic compounds, piperonyl butoxide, and rotenone. One (1) well sample analysis result indicated toluene contamination. Toluene is a volatile organic chemical found in gasoline, and in this case was attributed to that fact that the well pump had been recently replaced. Another well sample contained contaminants that turned out to be solvents used at the laboratory – a confirmatory second sample and analysis showed no well contamination. Over the course of the last four years, three landowners asked to be removed from the sampling program, and one declined testing for this year. One parcel was not sampled because there was no response from the new owner. Another parcel was not tested because there was no power to the well pump and a make-up sample date could not be scheduled. Based on the test results for 1999-2002, no link between the treatment of the lake and degraded groundwater quality has been documented. For more information, please contact Jerry Sipe at Plumas County Environmental Health, 283-6355.

What's Happening with the Portola Water Situation?

Jim Murphy, City Administrator

Last winter the Portola City Council sent a letter to the Plumas County Flood Control and Water Conservation District, administered by Plumas County, expressing the City's desire to return to Lake Davis as a potable water supply. The City usually uses Lake Davis water from April through October, but has not used the water since the October 15, 1997 DFG treatment effort to eradicate northern pike from the lake.

Portola's primary water supply comes from several springs in the Willow Springs area in the mountains northwest of the city. The water is piped to a million-gallon storage tank on the north side of the city, and delivered to Portola water customers. As water demand increases during the spring and summer, certified city employees supplement the water supply with the city's two deep water wells.

The city's two wells tested at 23 ppb and 26 ppb for arsenic at the time they were approved. At that time, the long-standing (since the 1940's) acceptable level for arsenic in public water supplies was 50 ppb. About a year ago the federal government changed the arsenic standard from 50 ppb to 10 ppb. All public water systems serving less than 10,000 customers have until the year 2006 to comply with the new standards. Several jurisdictions have challenged the validity of the new standard and it will be the first test case addressing the change. Arsenic is present in many wells in the Sierras and is usually present in wells that are drilled through volcanic rock. The new standard affects thousands of public water utilities. Private wells are not subject to the federal standard.

I have presented this brief explanation hopefully to help the reader understand where the City of Portola stands in relation to the new arsenic regulations, and to show that even though we have arsenic in our well water, we only use the wells when our water storage starts to slide downward and that there is a dilution factor with the Willow Springs water.

While Lake Davis water is arsenic-free, the Plumas County Flood Control District is unable to deliver water to the city because the State Department of Health Services has determined the treatment plant, constructed in 1970, and owned and operated by Plumas County, is "in a heightened state of disrepair with much of the equipment inoperable or obsolete". Plumas County retained an engineering firm to assess the treatment plant and to make recommendations on the corrective actions required to deliver water to the City of Portola and Grizzly Lake Improvement District. The engineers reported that it was not feasible to retrofit the current plant and recommended construction of a new one.

In 1970 when the treatment plant was constructed a "sinking fund" was established to reserve capital to build a replacement at the end of an estimated 40 year service life. Unfortunately, the elected officials at the time wishing to keep the cost to the customers as low as possible underestimated the amount needed to build a replacement, and only \$100,000 was paid into the fund, leaving it far short of its intended purpose.

The City, GLRID, Plumas County and Plumas County Community Development have been studying the available alternatives to accomplish a new plant. Costs range from \$4.7 million for 3 million-gallons-per-day of treatment capacity to \$2.7 million for 1.5 mgd.. We have applied for a variety of grants and low-interest loans through the state and the United States Department of Agriculture. Portola, Plumas County and GLRID continue to work on obtaining funding with the least impact on the utility customers. Also, the city is pursuing other alternatives to Lake Davis, and is researching the cost and design of well head arsenic treatment.

Reservoir Levels Predicted to Rise

California Department of Water Resources

The relatively low water level in Lake Davis has limited the attractiveness of some recreation areas this year. The good news is that the lake has seen its low-point for this year, and a wet winter would allow lake levels to recover to near-full next spring. On the other hand, a drought winter could still result in historic low lake levels next fall.

Currently about 13 feet below its spillway elevation of 5775', Lake Davis contains about 40,000 acre-feet of storage (full capacity 84,000 acre-feet). Current storage is lower than during the 1997 chemical treatment (47,000 acre-feet), but still higher than lows seen during the drought years of 1977 and 1992. Releases to Big Grizzly Creek have been maintained at the minimum (10 cubic feet per second) for many months. The Department of Water Resources always tries to avoid spill at Lake Davis, and additional spill-prevention criteria were implemented in 1999 to minimize the risk of pike escaping downstream. The current lake levels are well below the threshold requiring any action under that plan, but some modification of the release schedule may be made if storms cause a rapid rise during the wet season.

Lake Davis Steering Committee Members

Plumas County

Vacant

City of Portola

John Larrieu

City Councilman

Jim Murphy

City Administrator

Grizzly Lake Resort Improvement District

Mitch Selking

Save Lake Davis Coalition

Fran Roudebush,

Chair

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California Department of Fish and Game

Diana Jacobs

Science Advisor to Director

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Julie Cunningham

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California Department of Water Resources

Curtis Levine

Water Services Supervisor

Doug Rischbieter

Staff Environmental Scientist

Ralph Hinton

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Local Businesses

Saralyn Bensinger

Grizzly Resort and Store

Jerry Dollard

Dollard's Sierra Market

Technical Advisors

Tom Hunter

Plumas County Dir. Public Works

Rita Scardaci

Plumas County Dir. Public Health

Jerry Sipe,

Plumas County Dir. Environmental Health

John Heavin

U.S. Forest Service

David Spath,

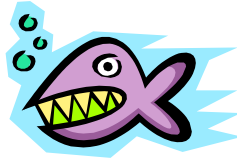
California Dept. of Health Services

Tina Carlsen,

Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory

***Come to the Lake Davis Coalition Meeting * January 13, 6:30 p.m
Portola Station Baptist Church.***

****** Help keep our trout safe from northern pike ******



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POSTAL PATRON